

# Columbia company aids Meals on Wheels bonds with clients

By Josh Kowalkowski  
*Examiner Staff Writer*

Volunteers with a Columbia company are aiding Howard County's Meals on Wheels program by delivering meals to clients, and they're finding the camaraderie they share is the surprise benefit.

"You really get to know the clients, and you get attached," said Katie Gibbs, a lab technician at W.R. Grace & Co., a chemical conglomerate.

"We try to spend a little time with them when we make our deliveries."

Since 2006, Gibbs and other volunteers at W.R. Grace have been delivering meals to individuals, many of whom are elderly, ill or have special medical or nutritional needs.

Employees receive some paid time off annually by participating in the company's Community Works program. They volunteer at various community organizations including Meals on Wheels,

the Red Cross and Howard County Public School System.

"A lot of folks said it's helped them just to remember what's important," said Andrea Greenan, director of corporate communication with W.R. Grace.

About 50 employees are involved in the Community Works program and about eight to 12 volunteer with Meals on Wheels, she said.

"We had heard about [Meals on Wheels] losing a lot of volunteers, because gas prices had been getting so high," Gibbs said.

Meals on Wheels has about 220 volunteers in Howard, and the numbers are dwindling regionally, said Karen Saul, the program services supervisor for the Howard branch. Some volunteers are on a fixed income and were hit by rising gas prices and the falling economy, so the organization always is looking for more volunteers, she said.

Meals on Wheels helped deliver more than 35,000 meals to 166 clients in Howard between July 1, 2007, and June 30, 2008, which is comparable to past years' figures.

Recently, W.R. Grace volunteers were busy making some deliveries in the Columbia area.

"With the elderly, you know they're at least getting one good meal. And if they're alone, they

can at least see someone's face," said Theo Jones-Quartey, W.R. Grace's manager of the library and information center, who's volunteered since the program's inception.

Some clients speak with the volunteers, but others don't want any kind of exchange.

"We sometimes get more out of it than we give," Jones-Quartey said.

"It's a wonderful opportunity and only takes about an hour at a time."

The company also makes donations to Meals on Wheels and is the lead sponsor in an upcoming 5K and fun run.

Meals on Wheels employees said they appreciate businesses like W.R. Grace that show the community what's possible.

"The rewards just are so much greater than what you put into it," said Saul.

"It's so much more than just a meal."

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## Benefit for Meals on Wheels

- » **WHAT:** First 5K and 1-mile family fun run to benefit the Howard County Meals on Wheels program
- » **WHEN:** 9 a.m. Nov. 8
- » **WHERE:** Meadowbrook Park, 5001 Meadowbrook Lane, Ellicott City
- » **TO REGISTER:** [charmcityrun.com](http://charmcityrun.com)

For a list of volunteer opportunities with Meals on Wheels, visit [mealsonwheelsmd.org/about\\_us/howard\\_county](http://mealsonwheelsmd.org/about_us/howard_county).



ARIANNE STARNES/EXAMINER

Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland client Nancy Gehring, of Columbia, receives a meal delivered to her this week in Columbia by Andrea Black, who is a library assistant with Columbia-based chemical conglomerate W. R. Grace & Co.

